

**Doug:** Hey, everybody. This is Doug with [Emotional Affair Journey](#). We're excited to interview world-renowned marriage and family therapist, Andrew G. Marshall. Andrew has 35 years' experience helping couples successfully navigate deeply nuanced relationships, and he has assisted thousands of couples in finding healing, balance, and love.

A quick introduction for our listeners. Andrew is an international bestselling author as well as a world-renowned therapist. He has written 20 books on love, relationships, and infidelity, which have also been translated into over 20 different languages. Andrew's best-known book is called "I Love You, But I'm Not In Love With You," and it was just reissued as a tenth-anniversary special edition. Today, we're going to actually talk about one of his newest works called ["Why Did I Cheat?"](#)

Andrew, we want to extend a very warm welcome and are thrilled to have you with us. We very much appreciate that you're taking the time to provide our audience with your expertise. Again, thanks for joining us, Andrew.

**Andrew:** It's my pleasure.

**Doug:** Great. Thanks so much. We also have Sarah P. with us. Sarah and Andrew will be discussing the book. They're going to be digging deep into the "why" of infidelity and why so many betrayed spouses are told their wayward spouses no longer love them in the same way.

So I'm going to turn the interview over to Sarah now. Sarah, how are you doing?

**Sarah:** Hi. Hi, everyone. Thanks for joining us. Hi, Andrew.

**Andrew:** Hello, Sarah.

**Sarah:** I'm so happy that you're back because I am a huge fan of your work and I often mention your book to my clients. So it's awesome. We love that you're here. So thank you for taking the time.

**Andrew:** My pleasure.

**Sarah:** Andrew, you have been such a healing presence in the psychology community for many years, and I really appreciate that. You have so many books that you've written, and that takes a lot of time. They are books with advice that I believe changes people's lives. So I've read many of them, and they're life-changers. So thank you for being both a therapist and an author. And thank you for taking time out of your busy day to be here with us so that our readers can hopefully gain some life-changing information. Well, actually, I know they will. So thank you very much.

What inspired you to write your book, ["Why Did I Cheat? Help Your Affair Partner \(And Yourself\) Recover From Your Affair"](#)?

**Andrew:** Well, something wonderful happened about five years ago, and that is that, rather than the person who had been unfaithful being dragged into my office by their partner, they actually started turning up themselves and saying, “Look, I’ve had an affair. I’ve messed my life up. My partner is on the floor. I want to help. How do I sort myself out? How do I help my partner?”

The problem they were having is that there were very few resources for people like this because, traditionally, these people have shrugged their shoulders and said, “Oh, I made a big mistake. I apologize. Let’s put it all behind us and move forward.” Then they start attacking their partner for being negative because they can’t do that. So they haven’t been open to books.

But I think that one of the advantages of the modern world is people are far more prepared to look deeper and understand themselves. The few books that I found to help people who had had an affair to recover and, most important, help their partner recover as well were really quite shallow books. They sort of said, “You’re a bad boy (or you’re a terrible woman). Do everything you can to make your partner better and just get on with it.” That is good advice because, obviously, your partner is hurting a huge amount, but you do really need to understand yourself. You do need to look deeper and really understand why your partner is so upset and why their life feels at this moment that it’s being destroyed. You need a lot of insight to be able to do those things.

I thought, “Now is the time to write the book and provide a resource.” If either you are the person who has been cheated on and you want to understand your partner better—you can have a look inside their brain; it won’t be pretty but it’s better to know what’s going on in there than to be working from the dark—or if you are the person who has had an affair, this will give you a chance to understand yourself and then to rebuild your marriage.

**Sarah:** Thank you. In fact, I think that book could have been written 3,000 years ago and it would have been helpful. Thank you for actually writing it because people didn’t have instructions for these things until your book came along. They simply didn’t. They set their goals—a list of things they need to do—but then there’s a, “Well, how do I do that?” So I’m so grateful that you came along and wrote this book and all your other books and that you have instructions and that you have ideas and that you actually delve deeper.

Now, you don’t have a literal instruction list. However, you give people an idea of what they might need to do. It’s not just a statement. It’s a, “Hey, here’s what the process might look like. Here’s how you can introspect. Here’s how your partner might feel.” I love that book that you wrote, so thank you.

That brings us to the next question, which is the scary statistics. The scary statistics—now, I’m doing a little bit gallows humor here—on infidelity do vary from country to country and from source to source. We know that, based on the research, in America, sometimes the sources will say that only 20% of married people have affairs. Other sources I’ve seen in America say that up

to 60% of spouses have affairs. These are huge statistical swings. Do you think these sources are underestimating, overestimating, or is it somewhere in the middle? Obviously, we cannot get inside somebody's life and be a metaphorical fly on that wall. However, there's got to be some kind of balance. Do you have any idea on what statistics on infidelity actually look like?

**Andrew:** I don't think it matters how many people have affairs. I think what matters is the impact it has. And the impact it has is devastating. I've heard it described as a bit like driving perfectly well along the motorway, you're minding your own business, you're doing all the right things, and suddenly a great, big truck comes and drives into the side of you. The shocking thing is that the person that is driving the truck is your partner. You're spinning over and over and you're being shoved out of your car. It is completely and utterly devastating.

Whether you're the only person who has a road traffic accident or there is millions of people having a road traffic accident, it doesn't really matter to you. What matters is, why did it happen? What am I going to do with the rest of my life? I think those are far more important than the number of people who have it. I think we just really need to recognize how devastating it is. Somehow saying, "Oh, 60% of all people do it," rather minimizes that. We say, "Oh, well, if it happens so often, you've got to get used to it." I don't think it matters whether it happens to just one person or everybody. It feels so painful. I think we have to focus on the pain and what we're going to do about that pain.

**Sarah:** I love that answer. I do agree with you. When I see the higher statistics, I think, "What can we do to curb this problem?" because a lot of people are in pain. As you said, even if one person experiences that, it really is a devastating situation. It's a life-changing situation, and we need a roadmap. So thank you for letting me know.

Let's move on to Doug and Linda's experience. Doug, Linda, and I speak with both wayward spouses and spouses who have been betrayed. There is an enormous gap in understanding between the person who cheats and the person who is betrayed. Each partner has a difficult time understanding why an affair happens.

Do you have thoughts on why it's so difficult for each spouse to put themselves in the mental position of their partner? In this case, I'm actually going to focus more on the wayward spouse. The wayward spouse appears to have a hard time putting themselves in the shoes of their devastated, betrayed spouse. I've noticed that this is where the communication meltdown can absolutely happen. So what are your thoughts on this phenomenon if you have noticed it yourself?

**Andrew:** Oh, yes, I certainly have noticed it. I think what we have to be aware of is the amount of shame going on in our society. We are forever being shamed. We're forever shaming people. There's a Twitter outrage and everybody gets shamed. The news is full of Person A shaming Person B. It starts in our childhood. It's one of the ways that children are socialized. But shame is devastating. It doesn't just say you did something wrong. It says you are, through and through, a bad person, and bad people get ostracized, thrown out into the wilderness, where

they're eaten by wolves. That is how strong shame is in our society. Hurting your partner deeply is going to make you feel full of shame.

Normally, if you are in a good place, you can lean into difficult emotions like anger or sadness, experience them, and learn from them. Unfortunately, when you get overwhelmed by shame, most people have got no way of coping with that shame. They just either close down altogether and just disappear, either physically or metaphorically, or they go on the attack as a way of defending themselves. They say, "Well, you can speak. You've two heads, too" kind of statement. So it's shame that stops them from stepping into the other person's shoes.

I do also think that, a lot of times, it's difficult for men to understand what it's like to be a woman and for women to understand what it's like to be a man because—let's face it—we've got no experience of being that. So I think that also adds to the problems. We see the world through our own eyes. Once we have the gender differences and we have shame in the equation, it becomes very difficult. That really is my job: to help translate, help men understand women, help women understand men, and hold the shame so that we can actually have a proper conversation. It's tough, but it needs to be done.

**Sarah:** It is tough. You make a very great point that men are not women and women are not men. We do see our lives through our own lens, and those lenses are ours, and they are related to gender and childhood upbringing. And of course, shame is the biggest thing that shuts down all communication. In my experience, the moment shame enters the equation, any kind of helpful communication begins to shut down.

In terms of dialogue—I'm not picking on men here—I speak to many betrayed women and they ask me, "Sarah, you know how a man thinks? How could he do this? How could he not emphasize with how this would make me feel?" and I'm like, "I'm actually not a man, so I can't tell you." So, Andrew, I know that's a little bit off-topic, but is there anything you could say to women in terms of the "why"? Because my betrayed female clients come back to this idea that it's their fault.

**Andrew:** The most important thing to say is that it's not your fault. But, if you want to understand the first thing about what it is to be a man, the first question would be, "What would it be like to go through the world without any friends that you can talk to openly and honestly about your feelings?"

Now, I think most women would understand immediately how difficult that is because most of them do have best friends that they can talk to about anything. They know they're going to be heard and not judged. Unfortunately, men often don't have friendships like that. Their friendships are more built on "My football team is better than your football team. My baseball team is better than your baseball team" types of conversations. They're also brought up with the message that they have to sort out their problems themselves. "A real man acts. A real man sorts stuff out for himself." Women are given permission to talk about their feelings and to ask for help from other people.

So what would it be like if you had no friends and you had to solve all your problems on your own? I think you can begin to see what a huge burden that would be and how easily you can actually get into a position where you do stupid things because, actually, if you start saying to one of your girlfriends, "There's a guy who I really like at work. He has suggested we go out for coffee one day. It's only coffee. There's no harm in it," she would probably say to you, "Are you completely and utterly mad? What's going to happen?" Unfortunately, because men don't talk to each other, they don't say this. So their guy friends don't say, "Have you taken leave of your senses?"

So that's the first, most important, thing to understand. Men are alone. The only people that they can sometimes get a free path to talk to are women to ask them for advice and help. And who do you speak to if it's your wife who you have the problem with? You might have a sister. You might talk to your mother. I have to say mothers and sons is an entirely different conversation. What you often find when you have a man who has been unfaithful is he often has a very complicated relationship with his mother, and they nearly always don't have any friends that they can talk to. They are incredibly isolated. There are deeper reasons why people cheat, and we can perhaps come onto those later.

**Sarah:** Andrew, my goodness. Thank you for that answer. As soon as you mentioned going through the world alone without friends, some lightbulb came on in my mind. If that's a man's experience, what a lonely life it is. I can't even imagine as a woman. So thank you for explaining that because it really did click in my mind as to why these things happen.

Let's go on to the next question. This is about lying. The biggest concern we hear from betrayed spouses is that their wayward spouse is lying to their betrayed spouses. In your book, you explore the destructive nature of lies. Even though the wayward spouse lies to their betrayed spouse, I often wonder what lie the wayward spouse tells himself/themselves/herself, etc., in order to keep an affair going. In other words, with the person who is cheating, what kind of lie are they telling themselves? This is a philosophical question.

**Andrew:** The answer to whether wayward spouses lie to themselves is simple. It is yes. The problem is, once you start lying to other people, you're lying to yourself. This is the greatest problem of affairs. You lie to yourself in the very beginning when you say, "Oh, there's no harm in going out for coffee with somebody."

I think what you're asking is the question that I often get, which is not, "Why did you cheat?" but, "How did you live with yourself while you were cheating?" I call this "How did you cheat?" What happens is there's a variety of different things that I'll go through in a second that build together to put the affair-brain together. Once somebody is in affair-brain, they are incapable of thinking straight.

What are the aspects of the lying? The first one is rationalization. When things are going well and there's a problem—say, for example, I'm man and my wife doesn't want to have sex with me—I put it down to something temporary, like she's tired or we've just had a row or I forgot

to pick up the dry-cleaning. So it's something temporary. It's going to go because she won't always be tired and I won't always forget to pick up the dry-cleaning. But when things are going badly, I start putting it down to structural reasons, like that she doesn't like sex. You can begin to see I'm taking the same piece of information—that we didn't have sex last night—and I'm putting two different rationalizations. In the first one, the rationalizations are all benign. In the second one, they're all negative. So, first of all, we get these rationalizations.

Then we get the justifications. Now, the justifications to the betrayed spouse will be seen as excuses, but actually, to the person who is having the affair, these are, for them, justifications for their behavior. It doesn't make them right, but these are the sort of lies they tell. They use them as alibis: "I work hard. I deserve something for me," or, "She really understands me." These are all justifications. These are lies because she doesn't really understand you. You just think she understands you or you're telling yourself she understands you.

The next set of lies are the lies that allow you to compartmentalize. "Compartmentalize" means that what happens over here doesn't affect what happens over there. It's the "What happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas" lie. So you tell yourself, "My wife is never going to find about this," which is lie because you're going to leaving a huge trail of evidence. She will find out because, after a while, you'll be leaving so many clues that she'll do the detective work.

The next kind of thing you do in lying to yourself is you minimize. You say, "Oh, we only kissed," or, "We only met up three times," or, "I had no feelings for her." These are all lies.

Then you have magical thinking, like, "I can stop whenever I want." "She won't be upset because she doesn't love me anymore."

If you took away the magical thinking and the minimization and the compartmentalization and the justification and rationalization, you might actually begin to realize that these are all lies. But you close down the topic in your own brain. You say, "Thinking about this is only going to upset me. It's going to make things worse. Just get on with your life. You've got to get that report in." You've close down the topic. You might even close down the topic with your partner as well by saying, "Oh, don't be so paranoid."

So, in all these ways, you're lying to yourself. This is how they do it. It's not why they do it. It's how they do it. The great problem of asking somebody, "Why did you cheat?" at the beginning of the discovery of the affair is that what you'll get is not the real underlying, more unconscious reasons about why they cheated. What you'll get is the justifications and the rationalizations that they've told themselves, the "how" they've lived with themselves, and that is going to be devastating for you.

So I would say, if you've just recently found out that your partner has had an affair, take their answer to, "Why did I cheat?" with not just a bucket of salt but three lorryloads of salt because these are going to be their own rationalizations/justifications.

**Sarah:** Thank you for explaining that. That was perfect.

Of course, that brings us to the idea of something that I hear from pretty much every betrayed wife I've ever worked with. They've told me that they feel their entire life was a lie from the moment they dated their spouse, to their wedding day, to the day they had their children. All of that was a lie because their husband cheated.

What are your thoughts on that?

**Andrew:** First of all, I want to lean into the feelings and say, "The pain is huge. You feel betrayed, and it feels like all of your whole marriage, from the very beginning, has been betrayed. Tell me more about this. Let's hear the stories you're telling yourself. Let's actually hear them out loud. Let's see if, when you say them out loud, you still feel they are true," because, often, there is a big chunk of your marriage that has been a lie, but it doesn't necessarily mean that they were not thrilled that you had that child, that the first part of your marriage was not good.

What it could be is that there are things that you want to look at through fresh eyes. Perhaps you put your partner on a pedestal and said, "Because he is a good man, he could do nothing but good." You might discover that, actually, that pedestal might not be, first of all, valid, and it might not be a very comfortable place to be, on a pedestal.

So I think that I would lean into those feeling and then begin to examine exactly what has been going on because it could be that the picture is more nuanced than just, "Everything was a lie." But if that's how you feel, let's start with that.

**Sarah:** Thank you. I have to admit I have never asked them to really talk about that too much. Now, these are in cases where somebody has been married for 20 years and the spouse started the affair at the 20<sup>th</sup> year. I usually say, "Well, your life before then wasn't necessarily a lie. Your spouse was present on your wedding day. All those vacations that you went on were actually real experiences that you have had with your spouse." What they believe is that it nullifies their wedding day, if that makes sense.

**Andrew:** Yes. What I often hear people say is, "I had a real innocence and naiveness before I discovered all of this, and I want to be able to go back to that position."

I also hear people say, "It's actually really frightening because, if my partner can cheat, what other bad things could happen? Suddenly my eyes have been opened to all the bad things that are going on in the world." It's really frightening to see how, effectively, we're on a small rock rotating very quickly and what a dangerous place it is. What often happens is it's almost like people have signed a contract with the universe: "If I am a good wife and I am a good mother and I provide a good house and I'm a good person, good things will happen to me." They sign they contract with the universe, but, actually, the universe didn't sign that contract with them. But we have an illusion that if we're good, good things will happen to us.

Instead of having blind trust in the universe, which is sort of what happened beforehand, what I help people say is, "What we can do is we can have trust in our skills. We're going to learn to

communicate better. We're going to understand ourselves better. In that way, we're going to build a new marriage and we're going to, over time, build up trust so that if there is a problem again in the marriage or our partner has an individual problem again, they will speak up and we can talk about it rather than go down this destructive path. So you begin to get trust in yourself rather than the blind trust in the universe providing.

**Sarah:** I love that answer about signing a contract with the universe because I cannot tell you how many times I, myself, have thought, "If I'm just a good person, and if I do A, B, C, D, and E, nothing bad will happen." Well, life doesn't work that way.

**Andrew:** Unfortunately, the universe doesn't sign contracts with us.

**Sarah:** No, it doesn't.

**Andrew:** Which sucks, but there you go.

**Sarah:** Yeah. Does the universe even have a pen? I don't know.

**Andrew:** I think probably not.

**Sarah:** Yeah. I don't know if anybody ever bought the universe a pen and a piece of paper. We don't even know if the universe has an attorney to sign contracts. So, hey, until that universe has a pen and a piece of paper and an attorney, it's probably not going to sign contracts with us humans because we are just spinning on that little rock, as you said. Think about it. The universe is vast, and in a vast universe, Earth is just this tiny little thing. So thank you for giving us the big picture and a laugh, too.

The next question is basically about something we somewhat covered. Many betrayed spouses come to me because they have this message playing over and over and over again in their heads that they were not enough for their spouse because, if they were enough for their spouse, then their spouse would not have cheated on them. They will go down this path of looking within and saying, "Oh, gosh. Do I need to lose some weight? Do I need to get Botox? Do I need to get a new hairstyle? Do I need to get a new pair of shoes?"—I mean, that's for the women—or, for the men, "Do I need to get a gym membership? Do I need to get a new wardrobe? Do I need to bring her flowers?" and on and on and on.

So the question is, does the person cheat because their betrayed spouse is not enough, or is it something within the person that cheats that causes them to make these decisions that lead to an affair and keep it going?

**Andrew:** I think there are several questions in that. On the first one, if our partners had an affair, it's perfectly natural to feel unlovable. The reason for that goes all the way back to our childhood. When we're small—in fact, this goes back to before language—we don't actually understand because we can't step into other people's shoes. So, if we cry and our mother comes or our caregiver comes and gives us a bottle or gives us the breast, everything is good with the world and we feel good.



Now, if they don't come, everything feels bad in the world and we're a bad person. Now, it might be that the reason our caregiver doesn't come is because they've got another child to deal with or because they're depressed or they're just too busy at work. There's 1,001 other reasons, but we think it's done to us because we're not sophisticated enough to actually be able to understand all the other things that are going on.

The thing about when your partner has had an affair is it is so devastating that you return straight back to that small-child state. So, if something bad has happened, it's because you're bad. If your partner doesn't love you, it's because you're unlovable. No, but that's how it feels. So it's not because you are unlovable.

The next one, you don't feel enough. Who said it's your job to keep your partner happy 24/7? We get sent some really strange messages: that you love somebody and that, therefore, you have to manage their life for them. You have to make them happy all the time, and, if they're not happy, it's something to do with you. Well, that's a very weird idea. But something in the whole romantic love thing makes somebody on their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary say, "Thank you for making my life complete," to their partner, which is a lovely thing to say, as well as, "You've made me the happiest man in the world on my wedding day," and all those other kinds of things. It's not our job to make our partner happy. So it's not your job to be enough for them.

Do people have affairs because something is lacking in their marriage? Well, I always use this equation to talk about affairs. Problem + poor communication + temptation = affair. Sometimes the problems are very individual. I'm currently working with somebody whose affair was triggered really by the devastation of the death of his mother and the fact that he would never be able to resolve the issues that happened in his childhood. There was no more time to make up for them. Is that anything to do with his wife? No. All of this happened way before she met him. This is his problem. Unfortunately, partly because he didn't know how to formulate this stuff and partly because, when the two of them did talk, the conversations went round in circles and went nowhere useful, the communication broke down.

Is the betrayed partner responsible for the communication? Well, only one half of the communication because the wayward spouse has to take responsibility for their half of the communication, for the fact that they didn't actually flag it up or they flagged it up in a way that nobody heard.

Is the betrayed spouse responsible for stopping temptation? No.

So I find this idea that I'm unlovable, that, somehow, I wasn't enough, is something, once again, we lean into, but I think we have to challenge them. Do affairs happen because something is lacking in a marriage? Well, in some kind of way, but I think what we need to look at is the communication, rather than feeling it's our job to make our spouses happy, because it's one small step away from being responsible for making them happy to controlling their lives. And controlling somebody's life is actually going to be very destructive.

**Sarah:** That was a fantastic and insightful response. We do sometimes work with clients whose partners are in sex addiction programs because the partner may have had a pattern of multiple affairs with multiple people throughout the marriage. In America, we say, “That person is a sex addict,” and then we send them to a six-week locked-in clinic to be treated for sexual addiction. Also, we have love addiction. People have treatment programs for love addiction.

So, do you have thoughts on if love addiction and sex addiction—please excuse my dictation—are the same thing?

**Andrew:** No. Love addiction and sex addiction are two different things. Addiction is about getting a dopamine hit when a particular substance or behavior is done. Some people get the dopamine hit from the romance that goes along with the affair. What they love and what they get their high from is the “You’re the most important person in the world. I’d walk over broken glass for you” kind of stuff. For the sex addiction people, the payoff for them is the high from the orgasm. Those are different things.

What do I think of the whole subject of sex addiction and love addiction? I think that, if it’s helpful for you and it’s helpful for your partner, great. Some people find that it isn’t helpful. But whether you have addiction or not, you don’t just treat the addiction. You have to understand the roots of the addiction.

**Sarah:** This is a follow-up question. In terms of understanding the roots of these addictions, do we go back to childhood once again?

**Andrew:** Yes. The root to recovery from addiction is nearly always through childhood. People don’t know how to soothe and deal with the problems themselves because they were pretty overwhelming. It could be that they were sexually abused. It could be that they had childhood trauma that was never really properly dealt with. The way they dealt with it was by using some kind of substance.

The thing to remember with addiction is that they nearly always come in clusters. So you might have sex addiction and love addiction. But nearly always you will get something else like alcohol or work or street drugs or prescription drugs. There’s nearly always a cluster of things that people are using to try and make themselves feel better, to feel normal. Often, when you actually go through what people who have got love and sex addictions went through in their childhood, you often think, “My god. No wonder. It’s no surprise.” So I think you have to go back to the childhood.

**Sarah:** Thank you. Let’s go to the topic of reconciliation. Some people would like to divorce. Others would like to reconcile and recover their marriages. Of course, they have a myriad of reasons why they would like to recover their marriages. Some of them are married for many years and they have grandchildren and they cannot imagine having a family broken up and not having Christmas with their grandchildren and their extended family, for this is their family.

So, what do you believe is the most essential ingredient for a marriage to recover from infidelity or an affair if someone wishes to do so?

**Andrew:** I think what you have to look at is that the old marriage is dead and we're going to have a new marriage. We're going to do things differently because, if you just paper over the cracks without actually changing anything and what I call doing the work of recovery, which is basically about cleaning out all the mess in the basement (or maybe you shoved it all up in the attic), clearing out everything, even the shed at the bottom of the garden where you're storing a whole lot of rubbish as well, and you learn to communicate better and you know each other better as the people you are today rather than the people you were when you first got together, you can have a new marriage. But it has got to be a new marriage rather than just pretending and going back to the old marriage because didn't work for either one or both of you. Sometimes even when somebody says, "It was a good marriage as far as I was concerned," the more you hear them, the more you discover that actually there were things that weren't working for them, too. So let's find out what those were. Let's have a new marriage.

**Sarah:** That sounds great. I'm going to actually ask a follow-up question on that topic if that's okay.

**Andrew:** Yeah.

**Sarah:** There are some wayward spouses that would like to sweep under the rug the fact that they had an affair. I was wondering if it's possible to build a new marriage when the wayward spouse wants to sweep all the details under the rug and never look at them again. Is it possible to build a new marriage on that foundation, in your opinion?

**Andrew:** Well, I would say no, but then there are also betrayed spouses who want to not just lift up the rug but want to know where the rug was made. They want to know what fabrics it was made from. They would also like to know the name of the factories and the person who wove the rug. And they would like to meet the person who designed the rug. I'm perhaps not working correctly with the image, but can you begin to see that there's a difference between cleaning out from underneath the rug and actually pulling apart the rug and re-weaving it?

**Sarah:** Yeah.

**Andrew:** Sometimes there could be such an intensity of trying to find out exactly what happened, and that can be just as destructive as not sorting these things out. There does come a point where you want to find out, actually, if you really want to go back over all of that again, or is there something else that we should be attending to? Do you understand the difference?

**Sarah:** Of course.

**Andrew:** And rather than actually going with the question, let's understand the feelings behind it.

So, yes, I do agree with you that it's pointless trying to have a new relationship if you're sweeping everything under the rug. But there is the opposite end of that where the rug is never on the floor, so to speak.

**Sarah:** Right. That can get people stuck in a dark, I would think, mental place.

**Andrew:** Yeah. That's often the time that people come and see me.

**Sarah:** Right, because it's very dreary.

**Andrew:** Well, there's no point going over, for the three millionth time, "What were you thinking about when you ordered the prawn cocktail?!" on the fifth time you went out together. Probably you want to ask a different question. "What's this really about?" is what I will ask. It's probably not about the prawn cocktail. It's probably about something else. Let's actually talk about the issue that it really is rather than this displacement.

**Sarah:** That is an excellent metaphor and an excellent way to explain it in terms of displacement. It's definitely not about that prawn cocktail. It's about something else.

In your opinion, what is generally behind a betrayed spouse's need for having to go over these details again and again and again? Because we know it's not about the appetizer or the hors d'oeuvre that they ordered at the restaurant with their affair partner. It's about something else.

**Andrew:** I think it is that they don't feel their partner understand properly why they cheated. If you don't understand why you cheated, then how are you going to stop it from happening again? I think that is actually what's at the bottom of it. People really do want to get to the bottom of the answer to: why did you cheat?

Often, the problem is that the person who cheated doesn't have enough personal insight into the reasons. That's why the bulk of my book is actually trying to understand the answers to that question, to understanding the past.

**Sarah:** Excellent.

**Doug:** Can I jump in here and ask you a question related to that?

**Andrew:** Of course.

**Doug:** Thank you. I talk to a lot of unfaithful people and have over the last several years. A lot of them tend to be of the mind that they really just want to move on and they don't have that insight that you were just alluding to, or much less even try to get to the point to even try to get that insight.

Can you address how an unfaithful spouse may be able to make that mental shift in thinking, where they have a proper mindset to do the work that they need to do?

**Andrew:** Yes. What I generally say is, “How is minimizing this and trying to push your partner to forget about it and move on working for you?” Nine times out of ten, they say, “It’s just not working.”

What I say is, “If you can just actually listen to your partner without defending yourself—just listen to them”—that often is a case of summarizing what you’ve heard so that they actually feel heard—“and your partner feels heard, then they will begin to be able to move forward.” If you keep on defending where you’re standing now, you’re just going to be stuck here, going round and round and round over these things. Acknowledge the feelings and you can then actually move forward onto it. Acknowledge your own feelings. Acknowledge your own pain and your own hurt and be curious about where it comes from because it comes from an important place. We want to find out what this place is because, if you don’t, you’re going to be stuck in this place forever.

So having a little bit of curiosity about yourself and having curiosity about your fear of discovering yourself is a good place to start. Defense just keeps us stuck where we are. We just end up in two trenches. It’s like the first World War. Your partner is in one trench and you’re in the other. Just throwing bombs at each other isn’t going to move you forward.

**Doug:** Right. And that defensiveness is a trust destroyer, too. That’s what I’ve found. I don’t know what your thoughts are on that, but it seems to me that, when I’m talking to a betrayed spouse, they always mention that their husband or wife is super defensive and it just erodes any kind of trust that may have been built up to that point.

**Andrew:** Yeah. The question is, why are they super defensive? It’s probably because, going right back to their childhood, they felt attacked. They felt they weren’t good enough. We need to understand that. Often, their parents split up under very painful situations. We need to understand that. We need to allow them to feel that pain and to understand. This is all difficult work, but if you want to have the new marriage, you have to become a bit of a new you as well.

**Doug:** Absolutely.

**Andrew:** The way to healing nearly always go through the past.

**Doug:** Mm-hmm. Great. Thank you. Continue, Sarah.

**Sarah:** Doug, in fact, do you have any more questions for Andrew? Because you talk to so many people as well.

**Doug:** I love the title of your book and I think it’s very important because what I found with talking to a lot of betrayed spouses is that they want two primary things. That’s for their unfaithful spouse to understand why they did what they did so it won’t happen again, and they also want them to be more proactive in the healing process.

So I think, on those two things together, if one is working on trying to understand why he or she did what they did, that’s proactive. So it’s obviously great work that they should be doing. But

what I found is that most people don't want to do it or they are afraid to do it or they can't do it or they're just lazy. It's difficult for them.

**Andrew:** I don't think they're lazy. I think they're frightened.

**Doug:** Could be. But it's difficult work. It's hard to look at yourself and what you've done and the harm and the pain you've caused. You talked about shame earlier. It brings up a lot of shame. It brings up a lot of guilt. It's not easy - but it's imperative.

**Andrew:** And it's rewarding work as well.

**Doug:** Absolutely. I can't tell you how much it helps the betrayed spouse, as you well know.

**Andrew:** Yeah. There are so many simple things you can do if you are the person who did the betraying—just something like actually bringing up the topic of your affair yourself, what a huge difference that will make. Nine times out of ten, the person who betrayed does not know this piece of information, because why would they? There are really simple things that you can do that will make things better. If you don't fall into certain traps, then things will get better. You need to know what they are, and I'm here to tell you.

**Doug:** That's great. You're absolutely right.

**Andrew:** The other thing I would say is that the healing journey for the person who has done the discovery—the betrayed spouse—is not just about looking at affair recovery work. I think also there's a whole load of useful things that you can do. You can look at how to calm your mind down. You can look at a whole range of other topics that would be helpful, like understanding why this is so painful for you.

We haven't mentioned it yet, but I have a podcast which is called, ["The Meaningful Life with Andrew G. Marshall."](#) Each week I do a different topic that actually is not specifically for people who are recovering from infidelity, but it is very useful for people. Sometimes I speak to other experts on infidelity. Other times, I will speak to other therapists on topics like attachment theory. I've gone one coming up on sex addiction. I'm doing one on body image for women. It's something that does nothing for your body image—your partner having an affair—so that will be a topic that would be helpful for you. I've done ones on how our childhood impacts on our adulthood.

So there's a whole range of topics that will help you heal. It will help your partner heal. It will give you insights into human nature because that is one of the great advantages of an affair: it makes you look at everything through new eyes and you learn a huge amount. And it makes you interested in these kinds of things. So have a listen to my podcast, "The Meaningful Life with Andrew G. Marshall," because I think you'll find that as helpful as my books.

**Doug:** Yeah. We'll definitely link to it as well so people can follow that link if they'd like to listen to more. So I appreciate that, Andrew.

**Sarah:** Yeah. Definitely, we'll send your podcast out because it's a wonderful podcast.

I have one last question, which was, if you have some words of hope that you can give to the betrayed spouses who will be listening to this interview, what would those words of hope or words that help them soothe their inner pain be?

**Andrew:** You're going to learn a huge amount. You don't want to learn this stuff, but you are. Whether you get back together with your partner or not, this information is going to be really useful. You're either going to learn to communicate better to improve your marriage today, or you're going to use this information in the future with new partners. Whatever you do, you're going to learn, and that's going to be really useful. Now, you might not want it, but it's a gift—a free gift—that comes with infidelity. And it's the only decent gift you get, so you might as well use it.

**Doug:** Indeed. How about any words or wisdom or anything like that for the unfaithful people that might be listening?

**Andrew:** Well, it's exactly the same. You're going to learn a huge amount about yourself and your partner, and you're going to see the world in a far more complex way. That's probably going to be for the better because, if your life isn't working, generally it's not a good idea to drive it straight into a brick wall.

**Doug:** Right. I can tell you, too, that, talking to an unfaithful person who has done the work and has come to the understanding of things and has been an active participant, you just see the difference in them from where they started and from those who haven't. It's huge and makes all the difference.

**Andrew:** Yeah. If you don't learn, you're doomed to repeat.

**Doug:** Indeed.

Well, thank you very much, Andrew. This has been very enlightening. I appreciate your expertise and, certainly, the information you've provided.

Before we let you go for today, could you maybe provide us with how somebody might be able to get in touch with you, either you through a website or anything of that nature, so they can maybe learn more about you and what you have to offer?

**Andrew:** Sure. My website is <https://andrewgmarshall.com/>, and you can follow me on Twitter, where I'm [@andrewgmarshall](#). You can follow me on Facebook. I'm [AndrewGMarshallTherapy](#) there. I look forward to connecting with you.

**Doug:** Fantastic. We really appreciate your time and expertise here in talking with us today, Andrew.

Sarah, did you have anything else to add?

**Sarah:** Thank you so much for joining us. We really appreciate it.

**Andrew:** My pleasure. Bye-bye.